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LETTER,

WHEREIN

The Scriptural *Grounds* and *Warrants* for the *Reformation of Churches* by Way of *Covenant*, are succinctly considered and cleared.

In Oppoſition to ſome, who, of late, have too boldly (and yet without Cenſure) vented their *heterodox Notions* againſt our ſolemn and ſacred *National Covenants*.

By a Welwiſher to a Covenanted Reformation.

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2 Chron. 15. 12----15. *And they entred into a Covenant to ſeek the Lord God of their Fathers, with all their Heart, and with all their Soul: ----And all* Judah *rejoiced at the Oath:----*

Gal. 3. 15. *----Tho' it were but a Man's Covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no Man diſannulleth, or addeth thereto.*

Edinburgh, Printed in the Year MDCCXXVII.

SCS #8021

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LETTER,

Wherein the Scriptural Grounds and Warrants for the Reformation of Churches, by Way of *Covenant*, are succinctly considered and cleared.

SIR, *April* 27. 1727.

I Send you my Thoughts about the Scripture-warrants for Nations entring into *Covenants*, particularly, for supporting the Reformation of the Church of *Scotland*, as it was carried on Covenant-ways, and by *League* and *Covenant* with *England* and *Ireland*. I do indeed, to my Grief, understand that our worthy Ancestors are found Fault with on that Head, by Persons of sundry Denominations, and at this Time, by some, of whom better Things might have been expected. Therefore, I send you this, in Defence of our solemn and sacred *Covenants*, particularly, the Form thereof: Taking it for granted, that the Matter of them is lawful and expedient; as has been sufficiently proven, by many learned and worthy Authors. What I here pretend unto, is to broach that great and important Purpose, upon Grounds that bear Weight with me: And my Bringing it once upon the Field, may engage others better qualified to treat the Controversy from the Bottom.

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It is at this Time debated, whether the Church of *Scotland*, and afterward these of *England* and *Ireland* in Conjunction with them did right, and are to be approven in the solemn Practice of entering into *Covenant* with the Lord, towards the advancing of the Reformation, in Opposition to the Enemies thereof. For Answer to this, 1*mo*, I would offer some little Abstract of these *Covenants*, as to the Matter of them. 2*do*, It will be fit to enquire into the Grounds and Warrants for national and solemn Covenanting. 3*tio*, To examine whether the Obligation by these *Covenants* extend to Posterity, and so remaineth binding upon us. 4*to*, To consider the Requisites for entring aright into *Covenant*. And 5*to*, The hainous Sinfulness of Covenant-breaking may be searched into. And,

First, There is in our Covenants, a Confession of our Faith, in Opposition unto the *Papacy*, and other Errors and Heresies: As this Church was gradually reformed from them; whereof we have the Series in the Preface to our National *Covenant*, shewing, that our Reformation from *Popery* was set on a Covenant-footing, and carried poportionally forward, as Light grew. (2.) A solemn Renunciation of all these, as of Popery, so also of Prelacy, and its Appurtenances, being a considerable Part of Antichristianism; with a professed Endeavour, thro' Grace, to root out *Error, Schism, Heresy, Superstition, Prophanness, and whatsoever is contrary to sound Doctrine and the Power of Godliness*. (3.) To lay out our selves for the Preservation of that Pitch of Reformation, to which the Church of *Scotland* had been happily raised; and to labour for bringing the Churches of *England* and *Ireland*, to a blessed Uniformity with them in *Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government*, according to the Word of God, and the Examples of the best reformed Churches. (4.) Herein, to hold Hand to one another; and against Enemies thereunto, under whatsomever Disguise. (5.) To bear faithful and true Allegiance to the *King's* Majesty, in the Defence and Maintenance of Religion, and of the Subjects Liberties; as also to preserve the Freedom of the Nation, and the Privileges

of Parliaments. (6.) To maintain and defend this Church in all her Rights and Privileges, againſt all who ſhall encroach upon, or undermine the ſame, under what Pretext ſoever. (7.) To be earneſt in the Cauſe, in Oppoſition to that *deteſtable Indifferency and Neutrality*, which we therein ſolemnly abjure. As may be ſeen at large in the Covenants, with the *ſolemn Acknowledgment of Sins, and Engagement to Duties*, contained therein: Whence it is plain, all true *Presbyterians will* cheerfully own, that the Matter of the *Covenants* is juſt and good. The

Second Head is, To enquire into the Grounds and Warrants for National and Solemn *Covenanting*. I ſhall, *1ſt*, Set down what's on either Hand yielded, by theſe who are ſincerely of our Communion, as *Presbyterians*; And then, bring the Matter in Diſpute to a narrower Point.

1. It is granted, That there is a previous Divine Obligation to all the forementioned Duties, lying upon us, according to our ſeveral Stations; were it not ſo, no Oath could bind us to them. An Oath cannot be a Bond of Iniquity in any Caſe, and particularly, cannot bind to any Thing not founded upon the Lord's Word, in his Worſhip, Service, and the Adminiſtration of the Ordinances of his Kingdom, *Iſa.* 29.13. *Col.* 2. 22, 23. *Mat.* 15. 9.

2. I take it for granted, that our Church, and theſe of *England* and *Ireland* in Conjunction with us, having ſuch a fair Occaſion and patent Door opened to them by a Chain of remarkable Providences, did well in profeſſing their Adherence to the Meaſure of Reformation attained, and joining Iſſue for carrying it further; and that the Interruption thereof was a very ſad Diſpenſation.

3. That we ought to pray, that the Lord, of his free Mercy through Chriſt, would open a Door for the Retrival of that bleſſed Work, according to what was profeſſed, begun and carried on a good Length in theſe bleſſed Days, with great Solemnity, under a plentiful Effuſion of the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit of God.

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The *Queſtion* then devolves preciſely into theſe *two Points*, 1ſt, *Whether it was juſt and right to interpoſe a ſolemn Oath in the Caſe?* 2dly, *If this Oath oblige Poſterity?* As to the

Firſt, We hold the Affirmative: And for Proof, I reaſon from *Deut.* 26. 17, 18. wherein we read concerning the Lord's avouching *Iſrael* to be his People, & their avouching him to be their God; whereof, I take our Covenants to be a clear and ſweet Exemplification. The Lord condeſcended to avouch the Churches of *Britain* and *Ireland*, as aforeſaid, to be his People, in Ways moſt notable and alluring, by raiſing a reforming Work, to a lovely Pitch amongſt them, under a great and plentiful Effuſion of the Gifts and Graces of his Spirit, and a large Ingathering of many to *Shiloh*; and they avouched him to be their God, ſwearing through his Grace, and in his Strength, to carry on the Work, according to his Word, and the Examples of the beſt reformed Churches. If it be excepted, that the *Avouching* in the fore-mentioned Paſſage was peculiar to the Old Teſtament Diſpenſation. I anſwer, There is no Colour of Reaſon in this Exception; For, none will preſume to ſay, that the Lord's avouching or owning a People to be his People, was reſtricted to the Old Teſtament Diſpenſation; and, a People's avouching him to be their God, is ſo manifeſtly required thereby, as the Counter-part, that it were choaking even to Reaſon, and yet much more to Religion, to call in queſtion the Morality of the Duty, being juſt the ſolemn Acknowledgment of a Deity, by owning his Truths and Ordinances, as in his Sight. The Relation of Churches to their Lord and Head, implies *Covenanting* in the very Nature of the Thing; and what is done implicitely by all true Churches, was done more explicitely, and with greater Solemnity, by the Churches of *Scotland*, *England* and *Ireland*, in the Covenant. Do not all true Churches, in ſome Form or other, bind themſelvs to the Truths, Worſhip, and Way of God, and ſo covenant with him materially?

Second, We have divers Inſtances of ſolemn and National Oaths upon Record in the Word. It were too long

and laborious a Task to review each of them. I chooſe rather to ſet them down in Bulk, and offer ſome Remarks about them in general, *Neh.* 9. 38. and 10. 29. *Deut.* 29. 1, 2.——12, 13, 14, 15. 2 *Chron.* 15. 12, 13, 14, 15. and 29. 10. and 34. 31, 32. Each of theſe and much more all of them, and the like, evince the Poſition I am now inſtructing. And with Relation to them, I offer the following Remarks; (1) Howſoever the Ceremonial Law was included, as ſome Part of the Matter ſworn unto in theſe Old Teſtament *Covenants*, binding *Iſrael* to the Worſhip then inſtituted, ſuitably unto the State of the Church before the Meſſiah his Coming in the Fleſh; yet the Scope, Ground and Nature of the Obligation, being *Moral*, cannot be reſtricted to that Diſpenſation. We are in all Ages bound to inſtituted Worſhip, and to a keeping the Ordinances of Chriſt pure and entire; and in our Covenants, by which a ſolemn Oath is interpoſed, the Obligation is the more ſtrongly fixed. (2.) In theſe forementioned Oaths and Covenants, the chief Matter, Occaſion and Calls were Moral, as will appear at firſt Glance; Namely, That in preſſing Straits, upon imminent Dangers, in Returnings to the Lord after great and long continued Defections to Idolatry, and other groſs Immoralities, they obliged themſelves by ſolemn Vows and *Covenants* to ſerve the Lord, and to ſet in Order, what had been out of Courſe in his Ordinances. Sure none can reaſonably ſay, That the Moral (as indeed the whole of the Old Teſtament Covenants were Moral) was peculiar to the Old Teſtament; and Swearing, being in its Nature a moral Duty, can make no Alteration in the Caſe, as ſhall afterwards be ſhewed more particularly. (3.) For 'tis clear, that the Covenant in the Days of King *Aſa*, as to its Matter, was Moral, viz. *To ſeek the Lord God of their Fathers, with all their Heart, and with all their Soul.* This, none will confine to the Old Teſtament; and it was alſo enforced by the penal Sanction of Death, in Caſe of Defection into the former Idolatries. Hence, I humbly think, our worthy Reformers ought not to be raſhly blamed, whoſe Sentiment was, That the chief Promoters of Popiſh Idolatry deſerved

ved Death; as is also contained in the Penal Statutes against *Popery*, enacted by *Parliament*. But, I enter not into any Disquisition about that Matter, as not belonging to my present Design. (4.) And with Relation to the *Covenant*, entred into by King *Hezekiah* and the People, it was also clearly Moral; and the Words are pointed to that Effect; *It is in mine Heart* (said he) *to make a Covenant with the Lord God of* Israel; *that his fierce Wrath may turn away from us*. It cannot be said with any Shadow of Ground, That this was peculiar to the Old Testament; For, here there was nothing of a *Ceremonial* or *Judicial* Nature peculiar to the *Jews*. And I think it remarkable, that the Record concerning a Turning away of the Lord's Wrath, was in the like Circumstances effectually verified amongst us, only of free Mercy through Christ, in regard our Rising and prospering in all valuable Regards, held Pace with our *Covenants*; and Faithfulness to the Lord, thro' his Grace, in the Observance of them. As also, we fell and were laid still lower and lower by our Breaches of them: From which (as it was said of old concerning the Iniquity of *Baal-peor*) *we are not purged to this Day*. All this I might instruct by Facts, but that it would be too long. And, (5.) Touching the *Covenant* in King *Joash* his Days, *&c.* We have therein a divine and excellent Pattern of the Allegiance which Kings and People owe to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; and also of the Allegiance due from Subjects to their *Sovereigns* amongst Men. The Words, 2 *Kings* 11. 17. are very express, *Jehojadah made a Covenant between the Lord, and the King, and the People, that they should be the Lord's People, betwen the King also and the People*: Hereof I take our *Covenants* to have been a clear and pleasant Exemplification.

2*d*, I reason from Vows, which are undoubtedly of a Moral Nature, and owned to be such, in our *Standards*. *See Larger Catechism*, Exposition of the Second *Commandment*. No Doubt, concerning the Moral here, can be moved about a Person's Vowing, providing these Vows be otherwise right in Matter and Manner. *Jacob*'s Vow

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is sweet and plain to this Purpose, as may be seen *Gen.* 28. 20, 21, 22. and diverse other Passages may be compared, as *Psal.* 76. 11. and 132. 2. *Eccl.* 5. 4. *Jona* 1. 16. and 2. 9. *Mal.* 1. 14. As to a Community, in Case any Exception be moved on that Head, I think it plain that a rightly constituted Church is, in the very Nature of the Thing, a confederated Body devouted to the Lord, and engaged to one another explicitely or implicitely; which with great Solemnity was done by Oath in these Lands, and may be justly reckoned their Glory: Besides the sealing Ordinances carry Solemn Engagements to be the Lord's; The strictest Ties and most solemn Vows are entred into by Communities, in the Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

3*d*, *Swearing* (duly regulated) is a special Part of Moral Worship, and so cannot be confined to the Old Testament Dispensation; we find it also connected with Duties uncontrovertibly Moral. Deut. 6. 13. *Thou shalt fear the Lord, and cleave to him*; *And* N. B. *swear by his Name.* It is also of a Weight so very great, that the whole of religious Worship is comprised under it. Moreover, (which is peculiarly to be observed) We have prophetical Accounts concerning *Swearing* in the Old Testament, which plainly relate to the State of Churches under the New: The following Texts of Scripture, which are manifestly Moral in their Nature, and also prophetical, concerning what should come to pass in the New Testament Church: Such as, *Isa.* 19. 18. and 45. 23. and 44. 5. which may be viewed: I need not transcribe them.

4*th*, It is to be considered, that the Ordinances of Christ, the Doctrine, Worship and Church-Government taught in the Lord's Word, are a Trust committed to the Church, and to Persons of all Ranks therein, according to their several Stations and Capacities. The Words in our *Catechisms* are clear, In the second Commandment, it is required of All, That *We keep pure and intire such religious Worship and Ordinances as the Lord hath appointed in his Word*: None call in question the Rights of *Superiors*, to require, in Things of Weight, the Oaths

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of these whom they intrust, That they shall be faithful to that Trust. This is founded on Reason, and usual in most Nations: And, with Respect to our *Covenants*, what are they? but only an Oath interposed, for binding us the more strongly and effectually to be faithful unto that great Trust we have from the Lord.

Against all this, it is excepted, That *publick national and solemn Swearing was peculiar to the Old Testament Dispensation, and suiteth not the State of the Churches under the New*, &c. To which, I answer, 1*mo*, That, the Warrants, as foresaid, which are prophetical of what shall be done under the New Testament, take off the Strength of this Objection. 2*do*, As was before observed, the very Nature of a well-constituted Church, implieth an Engagement to be faithful to the great Trust of instituted Ordinances and Worship, both to the Lord, and to one another for mutual Assistance: And our *Covenants* imply no more than the Solemnity of an Oath in the Case. 3*tio*, Considering the circumstanced Case in these Lands; the divine Call unto the moral Duty of Swearing, was very clear, in regard our Reformation, begun by a very few, was carried on in the Midst of many powerful Enemies, who, by all possible Means, fought to crush it, both in the Bud, and in all the Parts of its Advance; which rendered Oaths and mutual Bonds most necessary for keeping that blessed Company faithful to God, and to one another; while their Enemies laid out themselves, by all possible Arts, Threats, Terrors and Allurements, to divide and break them: If ever, in any Matter of Moment, an Oath was necessary, it was most needful in these difficult and dangerous Junctures. 4*to*, I sincerely think, That the Verification or Accomplishment of the prophetical Scriptures in the Old Testament, which have their Aspect upon the New, is plainly expresst, 2 *Cor.* viii. 5. where we are taught, That they who were received into Church-society, *gave themselves to the Lord, and unto the Overseers of the Churches by the Will of God.* I confess, that an Oath is not here mentioned in expres Terms, yet it is contained materially: And this having been the instituted Order observed in the *Apostolical* Churches

Churches, and so binding upon us, containeth in Substance, what is pleaded in Behalf of our *Covenants*, which import the Nations their devouting themselves unto the Lord, submitting to his Ordinances, and engaging themselves to be faithful to that Trust. If, notwithstanding we be still urged to adduce Precedents under the New Testament; I only add, That if this Argument prove any Thing, it proveth too much, and therefore can instruct nothing: It may be alledged (which the *Anabaptists* do) That we have no direct Example of Infants baptized under the New Testament, nor of lawful Wars, nor of Christians their being invested with the Office of *Magistracy*. But there is no Ground for concluding the Unlawfulness of these Things on that Account: For, the New Testament supposes and confirms what is taught in the Old. We have sufficient Grounds for them in the Word; and whether under the Old or New Testament, it is one upon the Matter, the Church in Essentials being the same, and the Old Testament is our Rule as well as the New. I go on to the

Third, *viz.* Whether or not our Covenants oblige Posterity? Here also, we hold the *Affirmative*. This I think may be soon and easily dispatched, *1st*, We find many Instances under the Old Testament of Oaths expresly obliging the Posterity; and of awful Instances, instructing, That the Lord punished the Posterity for breaking these Oaths into which their Ancestors brought them: I shall mention, as before, some Scriptural Passages, from each whereof, this Truth may be evinced. See *Deut:* 29. from the 24, and onward, 1 *Kings* 9.8,9. 2 *Chron:* 7.22. *Jer:* 22. 8. and in particular, 2 *Sam:* 21. 1, 2, 3. *&c.* where the Breach of an Oath (that seemed very exceptionable) made to the *Gibeonites*, was justly punished in the Remains of *Saul*'s Family. Compare *Josh.* 9. throughout. In Sum, the Defections of the Old Testament Church (as of ours also) were reducible to the sad Head of Covenant-breaking, upon which the Prophets of the Lord, in their several Messages, did much insist: And many Acknowledgments of this Tenor we have scattered through the Word; as in *Psal.* 78. and

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105. and 106. with diverſe other Places not neceſſary to be mentioned. If in any Caſe, lawful Oaths do oblige Poſterity, it muſt eſpecially take Place, where God himſelf condeſcendeth to be the Party, upon the one Hand, (may it be expreſt with due Reverence) and the Community hath the Honour to be the other. 2*d*, I argue from a Maxim generally acknowledged, That in the Matter of Oaths and Covenants, into which a Community enters, the Society is to be conſidered as a Perſon: And hence, ſo long as the Community ſtands; the reſpective Oaths (in Things juſt and lawful) continue to oblige: Were it not ſo, the Faith of ſuch Contracts betwixt States and Kingdoms, as to Peace, War, Commerce, and whatſoever elſe may be the Matter of them, would be quite enervated; For the Perſons themſelves, who engage into the reſpective Oaths, may ſoon be carried off. It were a ſtrange Poſition, and is, for what I know, condemned by all Nations, that a Society cannot be bound by any Oath longer than the Perſons ſubſiſt, who firſt entred into it: What Confuſions, this would bring in upon Kingdoms, States and Churches, is ſo manifeſt, that I need not deduce the Matter. 3*d*, I take the Ordinance of *Baptiſm* to bear ſo much, wherein, as I underſtand it, the Engagements of the Parents derive to the baptized Infant; not only from the Duties, themſelves, being of a moral Nature, but alſo upon the Account of the Parent's Oath or ſolemn Engagement; and when the Children arrive at the Years of Diſcretion, it is the Duty of their Parents to acquaint them, That theſe Vows ly binding upon them, which the Parents undertook in their Stead, becauſe of the Infant's Incapacity, while in an Infant-State. So, I think, is this Sacrament underſtood by the Reformed Churches. I proceed to the

Fourth, *viz*. To aſſign the Requiſites of entring aright into Vows and Covenants, which we have ſumm'd up, *Jer.* 4. 2. I refer to Commentators, for the Expoſition of the Paſſage, and ſhall only touch the following Requiſites and Cautions therein compriſed: And I preſume

ſume, the impartial Conſideration thereof, will be of Uſe for anſwering the ſtrongeſt Objections.

1. Oaths eſpecially religious Ones, muſt be taken with Underſtanding. The Matter, the Call thereunto, with whatſoever elſe pertaineth to them, muſt be underſtood: While Doubts remain, and the Mind is not diſintangled from theſe Thickets, the Perſon cannot ſwear in Faith: *And, whatſoever is not of Faith is Sin,* Rom: 14. 23. *Eliezer, Abraham*'s Servant, and the Spies ſent to ſearch the Land of *Canaan*, took not the required Oaths, until the material Queſtions they propoſed about them were ſatisfyingly anſwered, *Gen:* 24. 1, 2, 3, 4. *Joſh:* 2. from the 12. And I muſt ſay, conſidering the vaſt Pains our worthy *Progenitors* were at, for explaining every Point belonging unto the foremementioned Oaths, with the diligent Attention and weighty Concern which were upon the Spirits of People about them; as alſo, the clear Light, which did ſhine in theſe bleſſed Days, and the plentiful Effuſion of the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit of God; It is not to be thought, that ſo many ruſhed ignorantly, or without a due Concern upon them, as ſome do now uncharitably alledge: But, whatever be of that Matter, the Fault was upon the Part of the Ignorant, and impeacheth not Duty in the Caſe.

2*d*, Lawful Oaths, whether more private or ſolemn, muſt be gone into heartily, and willingly: The Matters which concern Religion, Heart and Sanctuary Reformation, may not be Fruits of Conſtraint. Moreover, to ſwear from the Influence of carnal and ſelfiſh Ends, mainly with a Deſign to advance ſome worldly Intereſts, is a Juggling with God and Man, in the moſt ſolemn Act of Worſhip. A diſmal Inſtance hereof we have, *Jer.* 42. 5, 6, 20. Nevertheleſs, a Difference muſt be put betwixt theſe, who refuſe to go in to religious Oaths from wicked Principles, being Enemies to the Advancement of Religion; and ſuch as keep off and ſcruple, from Tenderneſs of Conſcience, fearing to engage, until their Way be cleared; 'Tis no Part of a bad Character, *to fear an Oath, Eccl.* 9. 2. I had good and

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and certain Accounts of Christian Forbearance, and Tenderness used in these Cases, with Relation to our *Covenants*, by some of the brightest Lights in these Times; But, whatever has been of that Matter, I undertake not the Defence of all the Managements: Sinful Men may not pretend to be unblemished in the best of Causes.

3*d*, It were a most unwarrantable Stretch, and a murdering Delusion, for one to conclude his gracious Estate, from his going into a religious Oath, for the carrying on of Reformation. Howsoever important the Duty be, when rightly qualified; yet 'tis somewhat else, and quite of another Nature, that constitutes a real Christian; as might be declared, were it needful. They may with great Alacrity, the one Day, cry, *Hosanna*, to the Son of *David*, who will be as Busy afterward in redoubling their Cries, *Crucify him*, *Crucify him*, Mat. 21. throughout, and 27. 22. *Psal.* 78. 34, 35, 36.

4*th*, It sufficeth not, to give just Access to sealing Ordinances, without any further Inquiry or Trial, that the Person hath taken a religious Oath as aforesaid, in regard he may be destitute of the necessary Qualities essential to a true Believer. I charitably presume, our worthy *Ancestors* were guided to due Caution herein.

5*th*, It carrieth no Prejudice to our *Covenants*, that therein we swear to maintain our Civil Liberties: The Church and Common-wealth are not thereby confounded by an unwarrantable Mixture; In regard such Liberties are also a Part of the Trust given to Communities; and a swearing Faithfulness thereunto, is justly esteemed a Part of Religion.

6*th*, The great Matter then and Hinge, upon which all turns, is, The Vowing and Swearing in Faith, not entertaining Prospects from or for Self, but having the Eye upon God in Christ only; as 'tis well express'd in the *Covenants* themselves; yet hereby the Duty is not Confined to Believers only. As to the

Fifth and Last, *viz.* To detect the hainous Sinfulness of dealing falsly in the great and weighty Matter of *Covenants*: I offer a few Remarks, without affecting any Method,

Method, (1.) As it was with the Lord's People of old, so it hath been and is with us, One main Spring of all our Defections is, our Truſting to an Arm of Fleſh, *Jer.* 17. 5, 6. *Iſrael* was full of Self-confidence; Often did they repeat their Promiſes to do all that the Lord required, *Exod.* 19. 8. and 24. 3. *Deut.* 5. 27. *Joſh.* 24. 21. But alas! there was not ſuch a Heart in them: This, as to the Generality, was an empty Flouriſh; *Their Hearts were not right with him*; and hence, *they were not ſtedfaſt in his Covenant.* This was their Bane, and it is ours, *Pſal.* 78. 37. (2.) The Hainouſneſs of our Covenant-breaking will appear further from our Church-Hiſtory. We went out from *Popery*; and our Reformers undertook their great Atchievements, not by humane Politicks, but from a powerful and efficacious Work of Grace upon their Spirits, and the Hearts of many who joined them. The ſeveral Parts of that Reformation in *Doctrine*, *Worſhip* and *Government*, were again and again conſidered, having been often by Faſting and Prayer laid before the Lord for Light and Conduct: And ſpecially our *Presbyterial* Government was brought under the Cognizance of ſeveral *General Aſſemblies*, and therein examined, to adjuſt it according to the Word; Time was given, during the Intervals, unto every One concerned, to conſider and try each Part: They were alſo earneſtly deſired, and full Freedom was allowed unto them, to propoſe their Exceptions, or Objections, in open *Aſſembly* or otherwiſe: When, after theſe excellent and unexceptionable Methods, Perſons of all Ranks bound themſelves by Oath, in the Lord's Strength, to be faithful to ſo great a Truſt, and helpful to one another therein; 'Tis ſtrange the Practice ſhould be quarrelled. The Command is ſweet and clear, *Rev.* 3. 11. *Hold faſt that which thou haſt, that no Man take thy Crown.* And the Exhortation, 2 *John* 8. *Look to your ſelves, that we loſe not theſe Things which we have wrought.* Compare *Rev.* 2. 25. In Truſts among Men, Oaths are found neceſſary; and ſhall they be exceptionable only in the Truſt we have from the Lord? (3.) The happy State of Matters, as to the Concerns of Chriſt's

Christ's Kingdom, in our Covenant Times, challengeth special Consideration in its own Place, and aggravateth our Breaches thereof. The Ordinances, both of Doctrine and Government, were then in their Prime; Open Wickedness was repressed, how soon it set up its Head; and Satan's Kingdom brought to a low Pass, thro' a plentiful Ingathering of the People to *Shiloh*; Many were converted, and others confirmed. A Dispensation of the Gospel was most engaging, as beautified with the Lustre, and sweetned by the Relish of Heaven; We were then *fair as the Moon, clear as the Sun, and terrible as an Army with Banners*, Cant. 6. 4—10. Thus our gracious Lord condescended to append his Seal to his own Work, as of old his Glory filled the Tabernacle and Temple, when finished, according to the Pattern he had shewed, *Exod.* 40. from the 34. and 1 *Kings* 8. 10, 11. and throughout. (4.) It ought to be pondered, That the Obligation of these *Covenants* was the Case of Confession stated in this Church during a long Tract of cruel Persecution; many of the Lord's precious Servants and Saints were plundered, harrassed, and put to Death, upon the Account of owning and adhering to them, during that Time of suffering for the Covenants and Cause of God. As the Dispensing of Ordinances was most remarkably blessed, tho' under the Cross; so our Confessors and Martyrs were signally countenanced in their bearing Testimony thereunto, and owning the Obligation of our Covenants with their last Breath, and sealing the same with their Blood. It is dangerous Presumption for any to speak disrespectfully of them, or their dying Testimony, *Rom.* 10. 10. *Mat.* 10. 32. *Mark* 8. 38. *Psal.* 116. 15.

To conclude, I only add, That the Lord is righteous in whatsoever Strokes he hath inflicted or may further lay upon us, considering how deeply these Lands are involved into the dreadful complex Sin of Covenant-breaking: This would open a large Field, and lead into a sad History of the Defections of the Churches in these Lands, and of our Mother-Church in particular; but I enter not upon that extensive and melancholly Subject.

See,

See, amongst other Passages, *Deut.* 29. from the 21. and onward, *Rom.* 1. 31.

If this little Essay be quarrelled, Whoever may contest what is therein advanced, let him keep close to the true State of the Controversy, and instruct, That the Ordinances of Christ's Doctrine, Worship, and Government, are neither a Trust committed to the Church, nor was it lawful for them to swear Faithfulness thereunto; which I am confident cannot be done: And otherwise I see no Cause to take Things extraneous under Consideration. Touching the Matter of these Covenants, *viz.* the Doctrine, Worship and Government, sworn unto in them; There are so many Volumes for Vindication thereof extant and unanswered, that I shall not, on this Occasion, meddle with Cortroversies on these HEADS.

FINIS.

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